لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

إن الدين عند الله الإسلام

THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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Nabuwwat 1354—November 1975

EDITOR

M. G. AHMAD

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam

The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was born in 1835 at Qadian, a village in India. In the eighties of the 19th century, he was called to the office of World Reformer to combat the current of religious philosophies and to explode the Christian theory of redemption based on the fiction of Christ's death on the Cross and to tell the Christians and Muslims to call off their hope for a second visit from Christ as he had been gathered to his forefathers and barred like all mortals from coming back to the world, and that he had come instead as the Promised Messiah.

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The Promised Messiah initiated the Ahmadiyya Movement to revive faith in God, challenging rival churches to a spiritual contest to seek Divine sanction for the religion He favoured, through prayer and appeal to Him for guidance and arbitration in the matter, by means of His signs, to re-establish the glory of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, to expound and disseminate spiritual beauties and moral excellences of the teachings of the Holy Quran, to wean men from war-like tendencies and to educate world opinion in favour of renunciation of war as a means of settling disputes, to infuse hope, faith and courage in the drooping hearts of Muslims and all the depressed races and nations of the world, to warn the exploiters, slave-drivers, and pedlars in sin against the evil consequences of their evil ways, to collect under one banner all the true followers of Islam and lovers of peace and to inculcate among them the spirit of tolerance, good will and selfless fellow-service and a feeling of true brotherhood.

The Promised Messiah passed away in 1908 and was succeeded by his foremost votary and closest companion, Hazrat Hafiz Haji Hakim Maulvi Noor ud-Din as Khalifa-tul Masih I. After his death in 1914, the Promised Son of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Haji Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, was chosen as Khalifa-tul Masih II. During his 52-year long leadership, the Khalifa-tul Masih II organized a world-girdling chain of mosques and missions. On his death on November 8, 1965, the electoral college named, with one accord, Sahibzada Hafiz Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Promised Messiah's grandson, Khalifa-tul Masih III.

For further information about the Movement, its activities, aims, objectives and literature, enquires may be addressed to the nearest Ahmadiyya Mission or direct to :

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It is open to all for discussing problems vital to the religious and spiritual welfare of man, but it does not give any assurance to publish all articles received by the Editor, nor does it accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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CONTENTS

KHILAFAT LIBRARY

I. Al-Muqatta'ah ... 151

By Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih II.
(Edited and rendered into English by
Prof. Q. M. Aslam.)

نحمدہٗ ونصلی علیٰ رسولہ الکریم

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Al-Muqatta'ah

Sura Baqarah

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Alif, Lam, Mim : These are letters taken out (lit. *cut out*) of the Arabic alphabet. In reading each letter is pronounced separately, *Alif, Lam, Mim.* They are called *Huruf-i-Muqatta'ah* (letters cut out). Either a single such letter or a group of two, three, four or five stands at the beginning of some Surahs. The letters out of which these letters are cut out are themselves only fourteen in number. These are *Alif, Lam, Mim, Sad, Re, Kaf, Ha, Ya, Ain, Ta, Sin, Ha, Qaf, Nun.* (Transliterated—except for *Ha*—according to *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*). Of these *Qaf* and *Nun* are single letters standing at the head of their Surahs. Others—in groups of two or more, to a maximum of five—occur at the head of other Surahs.

What do these letters—cut out of the Arabic alphabet standing and articulated separately at the head of certain Surahs —mean ? The question is answered in different ways by different commentators of the Holy Book. Some are of the opinion that

these are divine mysteries and should be left alone—we should not try and probe into their meaning. Others think that the presence of these separate letters only remainds us that the whole of the Quran—this Holy Book—is composed out of the elements of the Arabic alphabet, but is yet a miracle. Why ? if it were a human composition, the Arabs were free to combine the elements of the Arabic alphabat and produce another book to match the Holy Book—why didn't they do so ? Others have said that the separate letters are abbreviations standing for the names of their Surahs. Still others have said these are oaths pointing to the themes which occur in certain Surahs.

All such explanations seem without point. Could some chapters of the Holy Book have abbreviations in the beginning and the abbreviations have no deep significance ? It is hard to think so.

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Some others think the abbreviations have a meaning commensurate with the subjects presented in the Surahs which follow. For example, *Alif Lam-Mim*, could be said to stand for *Allah*, *Gabriel*, *Muhammad*, which is to say that *Allah* through the agency of Gabriel sent this revelation to *Muhammad* (on whom be peace). Perhaps this explanation might serve the abbreviation *Alif-Lam-Mim*. But will it serve all the other abbreviations ?

Some commentators suggest that the abbreviations stand for the *Names* of God, His attributes, and their presence at the head of a Surah points to themes specially connected with these divine names. The names or attributes are not mentioned in full. Only their first—or their most important—letters are mentioned. Single letters are used to serve as pointers to themes.

I hope to show later that this seems to be the best explanation of the *Muqatta'ah*. It seems commensurate with the greatness of the Holy Book. It is also witnessed as a true explanation by the Book itself.

Some others have taken the abbreviations to be the dates

of important events. Each letter or group of letters has a numerical value—so each stands for an important figure or date. Or the abbreviation is taken to point to a time full of important events. The suggestion is not unfounded. It was put before the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) and he did not reject it.

Some Writers have made the suggestion that the abbreviations stand for the names of scribes who took down the Surahs to the Holy Prophet's dictation (Sale, Margoliouth).

Thus *Alif*, stands for Abu Bakr
Ain, for Ali or Omar
Sin, for Sa'ad
Ta, for Talha
Ha, for Abu Huraira
etc., etc.,

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The suggestion is ridiculous—only one more proof that ignorant Western orientalists are yet ready to flaunt their scholarly knowledge of Islam. The funny part of it is that *Ha*, according to the suggestion, stands for Abu Huraira who became converted to Islam only three years before the death of the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace). The Surah Maryam and *Ta-Ha* in which *Ha* is present as a key at the head of the Surahs, were both revealed at Mecca, that is about 10-15 years before Abu Huraira's conversion. Moreover we know from Hadith that even the Muqatta'ah—the so-called mysterious single letters—are part of the Revelation.

Also, if (as the suggestion implies) these Surahs were compiled by the companions of the Holy Prophet but given out as revelations, then it would mean that the Holy Prophet had taken a large number of companions into confidence and let them know how the Surahs were actually composed and publicised (God forbid) as revelations from God! And why were the companions asked to do this? Why were they allowed—thus—to become witnesses of a hoax? Even supposing this *was* to be done, why let the names of composers appear at the head of the Surahs

and complete the proof of the fabrication ? A strategy as senseless as this would not be employed even by a half-witted person.

The Hadith which proves that the Holy Prophet (on whom peace) regarded the Muqatta'ah as part of the Revelation of the Quran is to be found in Bukhari (Book, History) and in Tirmidhi and Hakim, citing Abdullah b. Masud as their authority. They depose thus :

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من قرء حرفا من كتاب الله فله به حسنة و الحسنة لعشر امثالها ـ لاأقول الم حرف ولكن الف حرف ولام حرف و ميم حرف .

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(Tirmidhi Abwab Fazail al-Quran)

This same report has been transmitted by Bazzaz and Ibn Shiba on the authority of Auf b. Malik al-Ashja'a. In English it would run thus : The Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) has said that

> He who reads even a letter of the Holy Quran becomes deserving of the Garden. This pious deed will earn him a reward ten times as large. And I do not say that *Alif-Lam-Mim* would make one letter, but that *Alif* would make one letter, *Lam* another and *Mim* another. (letter here means a word).

This was before the rules of the Arabic syntax were organised and written down. In those days *letter* meant both *letter* and *word*. Later when Arabic grammar was written down the term letter (or *harf*) was reserved for an element of the alphabet, it being understood that an element to become meaningful must be joined on to other elements. Even words which standing by themselves gave no meaning were called letters (or *huruf*). With such evidence before us, who will say that the Muqatta'ah are abbreviations for their own names entered in the beginning of Surahs by the scribes who took down the Revelation from the Holy Prophet's dictation ?

These theorisers beat themselves. For, on the one hand, they say the abbreviations are abbreviations of their own names

entered by the scribes, on the other, *Alif, Lam, Mim* they translate as *Amara li Muhammad* (Muhammad ordered me to write thus).

The abbreviations do not yield any known names. How can they serve as signs for names of any scribes?

From a Hadith coming down from Jabir b. Abdullah (to be quoted below) we have proof that the Holy Prophet (on whom peace) treated *Alif-Lam-Mim* as part of the Revelation.

One interpretation I have cited is that the numerical value of each abbrevation yields the date—the year and so on—of events referred to in the Surah which follow. This interpretation occured to a Jewish scholar who mentioned it to the Holy Prophet (on whom peace). On hearing which the Holy Prophet did not reject the suggestion. Rather he endorsed it. The interpretation, therefore, is worth considering. For those ready to ponder over the subject in the light of this, the way will be opened for new discoveries of meaning of the Holy Book.

The Hadith which poses this interpretation occurs thus: Ibn Ishaq and Bukhari (in their *Histories*, Jarir reporting it from Ibn Abbas, and Ibn Abbas reporting it from Jabir b. Abdullah) depose thus:

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مر ابو یاسر بن اخطب فی رجال من یهود برسول الله صلی الله علیه وسلم وهو یتلوا فاتحة سورة البقرة الم ذلك الكتب لاریب فیه فاتی اخاه حیی بن اخطب فی رجال من الیهود فقال تعلمون والله لقد سمعت محمداً یتلو فیما انزل علیه الم ذلك الكتب فقال انت سمعته فقال نعم فمشی حیی فی اولئك النفر الی رسول الله صلی الله علیه وسلم فقالوا یا محمد الم یذكر انك تتلو فیما انزل علیك الم ذلك الكتب قال بلی قالوا اجاءك بهذا جبریل من عندالله قال نعم قالوا لقد بعث الله من قبلك الانبیاء ما نعلمه بین لنبی منهم ما مدة ملكه وما اجل امته غیرك فقال حیی بن اخطب و اقبل علی من كان معه الالف واحدة واللام ثلاثون و المیم اربعون فهذه احدی و سبعون سنة افتدخلون فی دین نبی انما مدة ملكه و اجل امته احدی و سبعون سنة ثم اقبل علی رسول الله صلی الله علیه وسلم فقال یا محمد هل مع هذا غیره قال نعم قال وماذك قال المص . قال هذه اثقل و اطول الالف

واحدة و اللام ثلثون و الميم اربعون و الصاد تسعون فهذه احدى وستون ومأة سنة هل مع هذا يا محمد غيره قال نعم قال وماذاك قال الر قال هذه اثقل و اطول الالف واحدة واللام ثلثون و الراء مأتان هذه احدى و ثلاثون سنة و مأتان فهل مع هذا غيره قال نعم المر قال فهذه اثقل و اطول الالف و احدة و اللام ثلاثون و الميم اربعون والراء مأتان فهذه احدى و سبعون سنة ومأتان ثم قال لقد لبس علينا امرك يا محمد حتى ماندرى أقليلا اعطيت ام كثيراً ثم قاموا فقال ابو ياسر لاخيه حيى ومن معه من الاحبار ما يدريكم لعله قد جمع هذا لمحمد كله احدى و سبعون واحدى و ستون ومأة و احدى و ثلاثون و مأتان واحدى وسبعون ومأتان فذالك سبع مأة واربع وثلاثون سنةفقالوا لقد تشابه علينا امره..

In English it would run as follows:

> Abu Yassar b. Akhtab (one of the Jewish scholars of the Holy Prophet's time) passed by the Holy Prophet (on whom peace). There were some other Jews with him. When they passed by the Holy Prophet they heard him recite the first verses of Sura al-Baqarah, viz.
>
> الم ذالك الكتاب لاريب فيه
>
> Hearing this, he—Abu Yasser—made at once for his brother Huyyi, b. Akhtab. Huyyi was sitting with a number of other Jews at the time.
>
> Said Abu Yasser, "Do you know what I have heard Muhammad recite? By God, it was this out of his revelation—"*Alif Lam Mim*, this is the Book..."
>
> "Did you really hear him recite this?" asked Huyyi.
>
> "Yes", said Abu Yasser, Upon this Huyyi himself along with his friends went to the Holy Prophet and said,
>
> "O Muhammad you know it is being said that in your Revelation is the verse—*Alif Lam Mim*, this is the Book..."?
>
> The Holy Prophet said, "It really is so".
>
> "And it is Gabriel who brought this revelation from God"?

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"Yes", said the Holy Prophet.

Upon which Hayyi said, "Prophets there have been before but as far as we know, God has never fixed the length of time for which a prophet and his people were going to last, as He has done in your case". Then turning to his friends, Huyyi said, "Do you know *Alif*, stands for one, *Lam* for thirty, and *Mim* for forty? Will you accept a prophet whose time as prophet and the time of whose followers is going to be no more than 71 years"?

Then addressing the Holy Prophet he asked, "Did you have other figures revealed to you, O Muhammad" The Holy Prophet said, "Yes"

"What"? asked Huyyi. "*Alif Lam Mim, Sad*" said the Holy Prophet.

"This makes it harder and longer", said Huyyi. "*Alif* is one *Lam* thirty, *Mim* forty, and *Sad* ninety, a total of 161 !"

He went on to ask "Any more figures revealed to you"?

"Yes" said the Holy Prophet.

"What"? asked Huyyi.

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"*Alif, Lam, Re*" said the Holy Prophet.

"This makes it even harder and longer—because *Alif* is one, *Lam* is thirty and *Re* is two hundred, a total of 231 !"

"But any more"? asked Huyyi

"Yes", said the Holy Prophet, *Alif, Lam, Mim, Re*".

"This is still harder and longer, I am afraid. Because *Alif* is one *Lam* is thirty *Mim* is forty and *Re* is two hundred a total of 271 years, we do not now understand the position at all. Whether your time is going to be long or short, we do not know." Saying this, he and his friends departed.

On the way back, Abu Yasser said to his brother and other Jewish scholars, "It may be that all these figures

pertain to Muhammad and they total to 734 !"

All felt bewildered and said, "We all have our doubts now".

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This Hadith shows that the Jews assigned a numerical value to each letter—each number meaning a number of years. They went to the Holy Prophet and put this to him, and the Holy Prophet did not reject or contradict them.

If the Jews thought that the figures meant the number of years the Umma of Muhammad was going to last, they were obviously quite wrong. The Umma of Muhammad lasts till doomsday. But the fact that the Holy Prophet hearing all this from the Jews did not confute or contradict, also means something.

Keeping this as well as the subject-matter of the Surahs in mind, we can say that these abbreviatians—that is to say, their numerical values - refer to the dates to which the events mentioned in the Surahs belong. It is pointed that a figure provides the date of event of a time after the announcement of the Holy Prophet's mission. Or, possibly to an event which began after the date denoted by the figure. The events mentioned in the Surah Baqarah provide an outline of the history of 71 years after the announcement of the ministry (71 is the figure totalled from the abbreviations *Alif, Lam, Mim*). Then Hazrat Muawiya died in the years 60 A.H, Add to this 13 years of Mecca before the Hijra and we have the figure 73. Yazid was admitted to formal fealty by Muawiyah only one or two years before his death. Which is the date of the beginning of violent dissensions in early Islam. The figure 71, therefore, denotes the period of early Islam, the Glorious period of Islam. The Surah Baqarah pertains to events of these early years.

The other example is that of Surah Maryam headed by the abbreviations *Kaf, Ha, Ya, Ain, Sad,* the figure for which adds up to 195. Surah Maryam deals with the progress of Christianity, specially the progress it was to make during its resurgence after the establishment of Islam. The figure 195 gives us the date of the beginning of this resurgence. This is the

year in which Mu'tasim Billah—in the thick of his resistance compaign against Christian Rome - was deposed from his office as Caliph and replaced by Abbas b. Mamun. Islam was made weak against its Christian enemy. This is the year in which Christians made a new attack on Muslim Spain and re-occupied some of its territory. This is the year in which the most unfortunate secret pact was entered into with the Christian Emperor of Rome by the Spaniah Caliphate against the Abbasid Caliphate, while the Abbasid Caliphate entered into a pact of friendship with the King of France against the Spanish Muslim Emperor. This is the year, in short, in which rival Muslim Caliphates admitted Christian interference in the internal politics of the Muslim world and thus initiated the process of the decline of the Muslim and the rise of the Christian power. It seems to me that if the other Surahs—with abbreviations in the beginning—are examined with this intent, key-points in the history of Islam may be found in the abbreviations themselves.

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I now turn to the thesis we owe to Hazrat Ibn Abbas and Hazrat Ali. The thesis (or hypothesis) is this :

The Muqatta'ah hold important secrets within them. Some of these relate to persons specially connected with the Revelation of the Holy Quran. They deserved to be mentioned in some way in the Holy Book. Besides this Muqatta'ah the abbreviations also serve as locks for certain themes in the Quran. To reach these thems one must first unlock these locks.

My own thinking on the subject has led me to the view that a change in the abbrevitions used points to a change in the subject-matter of the Surahs. Also when a Surah using a certain abbreviation at its head is followed by Surahs with no abbreviations whatever, then these other Surahs continue the subject-matter of a preceding Surah with a Muqatta'ah. Similarly, Surahs which begin with the same Muqatta'h have the same subject-matter, so that in this respect, they are members of the same group, parts of the same chain. Accordingly, I think that

the same subject-matter runs through from Surah Baqarah to Surah Taubah—and the Surahs in the group are connected with *Alif - Lam - Mim.* Baqarah begins with Alif - Lam - Mim, then Al-i-Imran begins with *Alif - Lam - Mim.* Then we have three surahs viz., Nisa, Maidah and An'aam—which, are without any Muqatta'ah. They, therefore go with the preceding Surahs headed by Muqatta'ah. Then comes Surah Al-'Araf headed by *Alif - Lam - Mim - Sad.* That is to *Alif - Lam - Mim.* is added the letter *Sad.* Then Anfal and Bara'ah (or Taubah) are without Muqatta'ah, so they go with the preceding Surahs with Muqatta'ah. Which means that from Baqarah to Bara'ah the general theme is *Alif - Lam - Mim.* True, A'araf has *Sad* added to the abbreviation. This is because *Sad* stands for Tasdiq, Surahs A'araf, Anfal and Taubah deal - in addition-with the success of the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) and the advance of Islam. In A'araf the two themes are discussed in principle; in Anfal and Taubah they are discussed in factual detail. This is why *Sad* is added to the abbreviations *Alif-Lam-Mim* of the group.

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With Surah Yunus, the Muqatta'ah changes from *Alif-Lam-Mim* to *Alif-Lam-Re. Alif-Lam* is retained out of the earlier. Only *Mim* is changed to *Re.* This means a change of subject-matter. The change is that from Baqarah to Taubah the discussion was in terms of general arguments, rational and logical, that is to say. But from Yunus to Kahf the discussion is in terms of facts, facts of religious history, more empirical, that is to say. It is historical facts or the consequences of those facts within which the discussion revolves. So the abbreviation used is *Alif-Lam-Re* standing for *An Allahu Ara* (I am Allah who sees everything), My eye is on the whole gamut of history and the Revelation I am sending takes due accouut of what has gone on in history, that is, in the experience of man. In short, in the Surah Yunus to Kahf, the attribute of *seeing*, of historical experience is the major motif of the discussion. Just as in the

group *Alif-Lam-Mim*, from Baqarah to Taubah, attribute of Divine knowledge was the major motif.

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While still on this point, I may say as well, that many writers, commentators, etc., seem to think that the Muqatta'ah —the abbreviations—mean nothing, that they just happen to have been inserted. But this view is rejected by the Muqatta'ah themselves. If we run our eyes over the Muqatta'ah as a whole we find a kind of order. When they change, the changes seems to be orderly, natural, logical. Surah Baqara begins with *Alif-Lam-Mim*. Then Surah Al-i-Imran begins with *Alif Lam-Mim*. After this three Surahs, viz., Nisa, Maidah and An'aam are without any Muqatta'ah. After this Al-A'araf begins with *Alif-Lam-Mim-Sad* and Surah Anfal and Bara'ah (or Taubah) are without. Then three surahs, Yunus, Hud, and Yusuf, begin with *Alif-Lam-Re*. Surah Ra'ad after this, has *Mim* added to *Alif-Lam-Re* but the combination is *Alif-Lam-Mim-Re* (*not Alif-Lam-Re-Mim*). In A'araf *Sad* was added to *Alif-Lam-Mim* but (in the combination) placed at the end, making it *AlifLamMim Sad*. But in Ra'ad, the additional letter is placed not at the end but somewhere in the middle of the combination. If the addition of these single letters at the beginning of certain Surahs had been haphazard—that is, without rhyme or reason—the *Mim* in the Muqatta'ah of Ra'ad could more naturally have come at the end making the combined abbreviation *Alif-Lam-Re-Mim*. Placing *Mim* in the middle of the combined Muqatta'ah shows there is some design, some purpose in the framing of the Muqatta'ah. We have to look for that design, that purpose. We have a hint in the fact that the first group of Surahs from Baqara to Taubah is formed by *Alif-Lam-Mim*, while the second from Yunus to Kahf by *Alif-Lam-Re*. Which shows that in terms of subject matter, *Mim* has priority over *Re*. Similarly placing *Mim* before *Re* in the combined abbreviation *Alif-Lam-Mim-Re* of Surah Ra'ad, carries with it a certain meaning. Letters which for subject-matter are more important are placed before letters which for

subject matter are less important. After Surah Ra'ad we have Surahs Ibrahim and Hijr both of which are headed by the Muqatta'ah *Alif-Lam-Re*. But the three Surahs which follow, viz., Nahl, Bani-Israel and Kahf are without any Muqatta'ah. Which means the three Surahs Nahl, Bani-Israel, and Kahf in their subect-matter join on with Surah Ibrahim which has the Muqatta'ah *Alif-Lam-Re*.

After this group comes Surah Maryam headed by *Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad*. After Maryam we have the Surah *Ta-Ha* headed by the abbreviation *Ta-Ha*. After this, we have five Surahs viz., Anbiya, Hajj, Muminun, Nur, and Furqan, all of which are without any Muqatta'ah. According to our hypothesis, these four surahs—in their subject matter—should be subordinate to *Ta-Ha*. After this group we have the Surah Shu'ara headed by the Muqatta'ah *Ta-Sin-Mim*. Here the *Ta* of *Ta-Ha* is retained, only *Ha* is changed to *Sin-Mim*. After this, we have Surah Naml headed by just *Ta-Sin*, the Mim of earlier Shu'ara having been dropped, and only *Ta-Sin* retained. Then we have Qasas which is again headed by *Ta-Sin-Mim*, the *Mim* or the subject-matter of *Mim* having found a place again.

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After this, we have another group of Surahs beginning with Ankabut which happens to be headed by *Alif-Lam Mim*. For a second time Divine Knowledge becomes the motif of the Revelation in a new style, to serve a new purpose. I am not concerned for the moment with the point, but if some one asks, why *Alif Lam-Mim* emerges a second time to head a group of Surahs, the answer is that the earlier *Alif-Lam-Mim* group from Baqara to Taubah is addressed to non-believers the present *Alif-Lam-Mim* group beginning with Ankabut is addressed to believers. In the present group, Ankabut, Rum, Luqman and Sajdah, all begin with *Alif-Lam-Mim*. They are followed by three Surahs viz. Ahzab, Saba and Fatir which are without any Muqatta'ah. This means that they continue the subject-matter of the Surah Sajdah, and other Surahs in the group. Then comes Surah Ya-Sin, headed by the Muqatta'ah *Ya-Sin*. Saffat

which follows Yasin is without Muqatta'ah ; therefore goes with the preceeding Ya Sin, according to us. Then we have Sad headed by *Sad,* followed by Zumar without a Muqatta'ah ; therefore, joined on to Sad. After this, we have Momin headed by the Muqatta'ah *Ha-Mim* then Surah Shura again headed by Ha-Mim with Ain-Sin-Qaf added. Then we have Zukhruf headed by Ha-Mim, then Dukhan, Jathia, and Ahqaf, all three headed by *Ha-Mim.* After which we have three Surahs, Muhammad, Fath and Hujurat, all without Muqatta'ah ; therefore, joined on to Ahqaf or continued with the subject matter of the Ha-Mim Group.

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Surah Qaf begins with the Muqatta'ah *Qaf* after which, to the end of the Holy Quran, the same subject-matter continues.

The Muqatta'ah, therefore, show a progression, an order (even through their variations). Which shows that their presence at the head of Surahs is part of a design, not the result of any caprice. We begin with *Alif-Lam-Mim* which diverts into *Alif-Lam-Mim-Sad* (with the addition of *Sad*). We then have *Alif-Lam-Re* and then *Alif-Lam-Mim-Re,* with the addition of *Mim.* Then *Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad* with the addition of four letters to *Sad* . Then *Ta-Ha* and then *Ta-Sin-Mim.* It is obvious the Muqatta'ah run in to groups. They change according to some order. The variations come with the adition or eliminations of certain letters. Which shows that whether we understand their underlying meaning or not, the Muqatta'ah, the abbreviations made out of single letters, have a meaning. Whoever has placed them at the head of certain Surahs, has done so with some purpose in view. Had they been choosen, combind, and placed in a haphazard manner, they would not have fallen into groups, the changes in the combined abbreviations would not have come now by addition, now by elimination of a letter or letters.

Besides what has been said above, the critics—of Islam and the Quran—prove by their own arguments that the abbreviations at the head of certain Surahs have a meaning. For,

what do the critics say? They say that the Surahs of the Quran are collected in order of size, the longer Surahs first, the shortest ones later If the order of Surah is determined by their size, is it not strange that the Surahs should also be found grouped in terms of their Muqatta'ah, the abbrevated letters heading them? The *Alif-Lam-Mim* Surahs make one group, *Alif-Lam-Re* another, *Ta-Ha* and its modifications another, *Alif-Lam-Mim* a little later group themselves again. *Ha-Mim* yield a group of their own. If Surahs are arranged according to size, is it not strange that size should be indicated by a Muqatta'ah an abbreviation that heads it. If only this is conceeded, the Muqatta'ah acquire a meaning, a purpose. It may be that indicating size then becomes their only or major function! But they come to have a function. The grouping of Surahs around Muqatta'ah, now this, now that, certainly points to a community of meaning and this community of meaning serves as key to the meaning of the Surahs of every group.

Insight into the function of the Muqatta'ah comes from the Quran itself.

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The first group of Surahs is led by *Alif-Lam-Mim*. The Baqara is introduced by this Muqatta'ah. At once says the text —

الم - ذلك الكتاب لا ريب فيه هدى للمتقين

Here is the Book, there is no doubt in it;
guidance is it for the God fearing (2 : 3).

After Baqara we have Al-i-Imran, also beginning with *Alif-Lam-Mim*, followed at once by—

الله لا اله الا هو الحى القيوم -

نزل عليك الكتاب بالحق -

He is Allah, besides whom there is none worthy of worship, the Living the Self-Subsisting, the All-Sustaining. He it is Who has sent down to thee

the Book containing the Truth. (3 : 3-4)

La Raiba in one place, *Kitaba bil-Haq* in another, have the same meaning. Baqara and Al-i-Imran both begin with *Alif-Lam-Mim* and both announce the indubitablity of the Book. The Surah A'araf begins with *Alif-Lam-Mim-Sad* and this is followed by the announcement—

كتاب انزل عليك فلا يكن فى صدرك حرج منه لتنذر به
و ذكرى للمؤمنين -

> It is the Book revealed unto thee—so let there be no straitness in thy bosom concerning it—that thou mayest warn thereby and that the Book may prove an exhortation for the believers. (7 : 3)

So here also it is the indubitable Book which is the central theme. The words 'let there be no straitness in thy bosom' can only point to the indubitablity of the Revelation which is being unfolded.

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After this first group of Surahs if—skipping over a certain number—we arrive at another group of Surahs the motif of which is, again, *Alif-Lam-Mim*. Ankabut, the first of the group, is headed by *Alif-Lam-Mim*. Which is followed by the announcement—

أحسب الناس أن يتركوا ان يقولوا امنا و هم لا يفتنون -
ولقد فتنا الذين من قبلهم فليعلمن الله الذى صدقوا وليعلمن
الكاذبين -

> Do men think they will be let off because they say, We believe, and that they will not be put to any trial? Remember we did try those who went before, so will Allah know with certainty those who are truthful and He will assuredly know those who only lie. (29 : 3-4)

In these verses also the accent is on a Book that cannot be

doubted. 'To be put to trial' can have little meaning except for the elimination of doubt, of misgivings. The subject-matter of the Surahs, therefore, is the same as that of Baqara and the other Surah of that group. The difference between the two *Alif-Lam-Mim* groups is that the earlier one is addressed to mankind as such, the later one is addressed to believers among mankind. In the earlier group the argument—for the indubitability of the Book—is meant for men in general, in the later group it is addressed to believers who have yet to attain to a proper standard of belief. How can this be, while doubts still lurk in their minds, while they yet await their trial? The subject-matter of Surah Rum is the same, only more subtle. Says the Surah Rum—

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الم—غلبتَ الروم - فی ادنی الارض وهم من بعد غلبهم سیغلبون -

Defeated have been the Romans in the land nearby,
and yet, after their defeat, they will—again—
be victorious. (30 : 3-4)

Not the whole Book this time, but a specific point in it is held up as witness and proof. When this promise is fulfilled it will provide certain proof that the Revelation is Revelation from God. The special accent is clearly present in the *mim* and *sin* of the Arabic text.

After Surah Rum, we have Surah Luqman which is headed by the Muqatta'ah *Alif-Lam-Mim*. Here the announcement, with which the Surah opons is

تلك آيات الكتاب الحكيم- هدى و رحمة للمحسنين
الـذين يقـيمون الصلوة و يؤتون الزكوة و هم
بالاخرة هم يؤقنون اولئك عـلى هـدى من ربهم
و اولئك هم المفلحون .

These are verses of the Book of the All-Wise,
a guidance and a mercy for those who love doing good ; they are those who establish prayer

and pay the Zakat and who are certain there is an Hereafter : they are those who are set firmly on the Guidance from their Lord, and it is they who will prosper (31 : 3-6)

Here also the accent on God the *Hakim* (the All-Wise) Who has sent the Book is meant to point to the indubitability of the Holy Quran. It is a repetition in a different style of the opening verses of the Surah Baqara.

After Luqman we have the Surah Sajdah which also is headed by *Alif-Lam-Mim* and which opens with a similar announcement, viz.

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تنزيل الكتاب لاريب فيه من رب العالمين

The Revelation of the Book—No doubt is in it—it is from the Lord of the worlds (32 : 3)

Again the accent is on the Book contents of which are free from doubt, all doubt.

These verses all point to the same thing : that where you have *Alif-Lam-Mim* there the Surah opens with a certain specific assertion and the assertion is about the indubitable character of Knowledge that comes as Revelation from God. In view of this how can we agree that the Muqatta'ah are haphazard additions made at the heads of certain Surahs.

Truth, therefore, is that the letters *Alif-Lam-Mim* are inserted to remove doubt and induct certitude. And this is where perfect knowldge steps in, knowledge we can only have from God. The combination *Alif-Lam-Mim*, therefore, means *An Allahu 'Alam*, I am Allah the Most Knowing. To relieve yourselves of doubt and to attain certitude, ponder over My communication, and read the Book Revealed by Me !

Now let me turn to *Alif-Lam-Re*. The Surahs for which this combination of single letters serves as a motif raise the same general theme. Surah Yunus begins thus :

الر ـ تلك آيت الكتب الحكيم ـ اكان للناس عجباً ان

اوحينا الى رجل منهم ان انذر الناس و بشرالذين
آمنو ان لهم قدم صدق عند ربهم قال الكافرون ان
هذا ساحر مبين -

Alif-Lam Re. These are the verses of the Book full of Wisdom. Is it any wonder for men that We have sent down revelation to a man from among themselves, saying, Warn men and give glad tidings to those who believe that they have high rank with their Lord ? The disbelievers say, 'Surely, here is a manifest sorcerer (10 : 2-3)

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Similarly Surah Hud bsgins thus

الر - كتاب احكمت آياته ثم فصلت من لدن حكيم خبير
الا تعبدوا الا الله انني لكم منه نذير وبشير - وان
استغفروا ربكم ثم توبوا اليه يمتعكم متاعاً حسناً الى
اجل مسمى و يؤت كل ذى فضل فضله - و ان تولوا
فانى اخاف عليكم عذاب يوم كبير .

Alif-Lam-Re : This is a Book whose verses have also been made firm and perfect and which have also been expounded in detail. It is from the One All-Wise, All-Aware. It teaches that you should worship none but Allah - I come to you as a warner and an announcer of good news from Him, And that you seek forgiveness of your Lord and then turn to Him - He will provide for you a goodly provision until an appointed term. And He will grant His grace to everyone possessed of merit and if you turn away, then surely I fear for you the punishment of a dreadful day (11 : 2-4)

Similarly Surah Yusuf begins :

الر ـ تلك آيات الكتاب المبين ـ انا انزلناه قرآناً عربياً
لعلكم تعقلون ـ نحن نقص عليك احسن القصص بما
اوحينا اليك هذا القرآن ـ و ان كنت من قبله لمن
الغافلين .

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Alif-Lam-Re : These are verses of the Book-Clear ; We have revealed it—the Arabic Quran • that you may understand ; We narrate unto thee the best of narratives in that We have revealed to thee this Quran, thou wast before this of those unaware, just unaware. (12 : 2-4)

Then Surah Ra'ad begins thus :

المر ـ تلك آيات الكتاب و الذى انزل اليك من ربك
الحق و لكن اكثر الناس لا يؤمنون ـ الله الذى رفع
السماوات بغير عمد ترونها ثم استوى على العرش
و سخر الشمس و القمر كل يجرى لاجل مسمى يدبر
الامر يفصل الايات لعلكم بلقاء ربكم توقنون .

Alif-Lam-Mim-Re : These are verses of the Book—the one that has been revealed to thee by thy Lord is the Truth, though most men believe not ; Allah is He Who raised up the heavens without pillars that you can see, then settled Himself on the Throne, and He pressed the sun and the moon into your service - Each planet pursues its own course for an appointed time-He regulates all affairs-He clearly explains the signs, that you may have firm belief in the meeting with your Lord (13 : 2-3)

In this announcement you have both themes-the one connected with *Mim* as well as the one connected with *Re*,

We then have Surah Ibrahim which begins with the announcement :

الر ـ كتب انزلناه اليك لتخرج الناس من الظلمات
الى النور باذن ربهم الى صراط العزيز الحميد ـ الله
الذى له ما فى السموات وما فى الارض و ويل للكافرين
من عذاب شديد .

Alif-Lam-Re : A Book which We have revealed to thee, that thou mayest lead mankind from out of the depths of darkness into the Light, by the command of their Lord, to the path of the Mighty, the Praise-worthy - the path of Allah to Whom belongs whatever is in the Heavens and whatever is in the earth - And woe to the disbelievers for a terrible punishment. (14 : 2-3).

Then in Surah Hijr we have :

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الر ـ تلك آيات الكتاب و قران مبين ـ ربما يود
الذين كفروا لو كانوا مسلمين ـ ذرهم ياكلوا و
و يتمتعوا يلههم الامل فسوف يعلمون ـ و ما اهلكنا
من قرية الا ولها كتاب معلوم ـ ما تسبق من امة
اجلها و ما يستاخرون .

Alif-Lam-Re : These are verses of the Book and of the Quran Illuminating ! Often do disbelievers themselves wish they were Muslims, But leave them alone that they may eat and drink and make merry and that this vain hope may beguile them - but they will know and pretty soon. And never have We destroyed a town but there was for it a known decree. No people can escape their appointed doom by outstripping their term by putting it off ; (15 : 2-6).

Now let us look at these passages—those occuring at the beginning of the Surahs of this *Alif-Lam-Re* group. We will find that two themes are outstanding and run through the whole group: Firstly we have references to earlier history, especially the history of those who tormented the prophets. In the narratives of these earlier peoples the point is brought out how they were punished for their excesses. Secondly, we have the recurrent theme of creation—creation of the universe, our own world included. Surah Yunus begins with a challenging question to which nobody could dare to answer, Yes :

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Do men wonder that we have sent down a revelation to one from among them ?

Which means that prophets—warners, bearers of glad tidings—have always been coming in the past. Who will deny this today? Surah Hud begins by reminding that the historical process is always at work. Change is the rule, a going-forward that is to say, that applies to every people [He will provide for you a goodly provision until an appointed time ! (11 : 4)]. It then passes on to the subject of creation and announces that the law of progress by stages is at work [He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods (11 : 8)] Surah Yusuf, similarly, begins with a reference to history ['We narrate unto thee the best of narrative...(12 : 4)]. Surah Ra'ad has *Mim* added to *Alif-Lam-Re*. Which means the Surah draws on the themes of *Alif-Lam-Mim* and *Alif-Lam-Re*. In view of the *Mim* we have here first a reference to the certain truth of the Holy Book [The one which has been revealed to thee from thy Lord is the Truth....(13 : 2)]

We have attention pointed to the whole creation (the sun, the moon, the planets, the earth, mountains and rivers and fruits of every kind (13 : 4)] for reverent study. In Surah Ibrahim—headed by *Alif-Lam-Re*—we have again reference to past history (14 : 6) and to the natural order with a guiding Master's Hand behind it. In Surah Hijr we again have reference to events of past history. Historical events and order in nature, then are the two themes of this group of *Alif-Lam-Re*. Both subjects need

a keen perception. Both, therefore, have to do with seeing! The Muqatta'ah *Alif-Lam-Re* points to this very attribute of the Divine Being: I am Allah, Most Seeing. Neither past—and apparently long forgotton-history is out of my sight, nor what goes on in the natural order, what laws regulate it and keep it going. Where knowledge comes from seeing, I am the One, the Only One, to guide you.

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One thing more—and very important—we need to remember about the Muqatta'ah is that although a change in their composition points to a change in the subject-matter which follows, there is one feature which is constant among *Surahs* headed by a Muqatta'ah. This is that every chapter headed by a Muqatta'ah begins with a reference to the Revelation. The Revelation may be explicit—to *the Book* or to *the Quran* or it may be implicit—to some ancient book of revelation as in Surah Maryam, or to some isolated single instance of revelation as in Surah Rum—(This note on the Muqatta'ah is repeated under Surah Baqarah and under Surah Yunus: this because the commentary on Yunus published earlier, and the commentary on Baqara later. Under Yunus this note happened to be included because it was helpful, under Baqara it had to be, because it was its rightful place).

We have accepted two interpretation of the Huruf-i-Muqatta'ah (abbreviations made out of single letters). One is that the Muqatta'ah stand for the names of God and each single Muqatta'ah points to a subject-matter specially connected with a Divine Name or Attribute. The other interpretation is that the inclusion of these cutout single letters is intended to point to something usually some event or date—connected with the numerical value of the cut-out letter or letters. The figures derived from the letters mean important dates or facts. Both these interpretations are valid and accepted. We do not have to accept one and reject the other. They are not contradictory. On this point I am supported by some well-known doctors of the Islamic religion. Thus Ibn Abi Hatim—reporting from Abu Jaafar Razi, he reporting from Abul Aaliya has said (I translate a portion of it only).

> Of these single letters-that is *Alif*, *Lam*, *Mim* and other cut out letters called Muqatta'ah, there is not a single one which is not a key to one or another of the Beautiful Names of God. Nor is any of these letters which will not count as one of the Blessings of God, or which is not derived from the Light of God. Not one of these letters which is not connected vitally with the history of one or another of the peoples of the world, it may be their history in general or some important date in it.

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In short, these single letters issued as abbreviations at the head of some Surahs serve three functions at one and the same time: they point to certain Names of God, They point to certain important dates, and they also serve as examples of the miraculous speech of God. What Abul Aaliya has said is valid and true. Ibn Jarir also has said the same thing in a slightly different way. He also has endorsed the view of Abul Aaliya.

One question can be asked about the use of these abbreviations: Why has the Quran resorted to this unusual medium or method of communication? Why not whatever was to be communicated, communiated in plain ordinary language? That would have made the communication easy to understand not only for Arabs, but also for others? The answer to this is that this is not an unusual medium or method of communication. It was in use among the Arabs. Great and important Arab poets used this, and not only in poetry but also in prose. Here is an example from a poet:

قلنـــا قفي لنـــا فقـــالت قاف

> We asked her to stop for our sake and she answered Qa'f.

Meaning *Waqaftu* (Here, I stop as you say). Another example from Arabic poetry:

بالخير خيرات و ان شراقاً
ولا أريد اشرا الا أن تا

> That is, I will return good by good, but if your intention happens to be evil, you will find me ready to pay you back in the same coin, I intend no evil, unless you intend so.

In this couplet *Fasharran* is replaced by just *Fa* and *Tasha*, by just Ta.

We also have an Hadith of the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and the blessings of God):

من أعان على قتل مومن بشطر كلمة لقى الله عزوجل مكتوب بين عينيه أيس من رحمة الله

> That is, he who, describing the murder of a Muslim, uses not full word but only a part of it (sayin *Uq* only instead of the full *Uqtul*), then on the Day of Judgment, he will rise with these words written on his forehead, Lost the, Mercy of God. (Ibn Maja).

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These examples are enough to prove that the use of abbreviations, both in prose and in poetry, was known and accepted among the Arabs. The Holy Quran has presented an example of the same practice in its own original and elegant manner. This is the rationale of the use of Muqatta'ah in Surahs of the Holy Quran. In modern times, especially in the West, the use of abbreviations—composed out of sirgle letters of the alphabet-is very common. It is in fact on the increase. Degrees and decorations B.A., M.A., B.Ed., M.D. etc. in hundreds and thousands are in use today. Their utility is understood by all.

Under Surah Yusuf:

Alif-Lam-Re: 'I am Allah, the Most Seeing'! In this Surah also arguments derive from observation—in a broad sense—which is better called experience, experience enshrined in history and in familiar

human situations. The argument here is that the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) has appeared under conditions, the broad facts of his claim, and the reactions to his claim are, similar to those of the prophet Yusuf.

If Yusuf was rejected as an impostor - before people really got to know and judge him, and if it was wrong to reject Yusuf as impostor, it cannot but be wrong to reject the Holy Prophet as impostor. The two situations are so similar.

Under Surah Ra'ad :

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Alif-Lam-Mim-Re : The three Surahs preceding were headed by the abbreviation *Alif-Lam-Re*. But the abbreviation heading the present Surah has *Mim* added to it. This addition of *Mim* indicates a change of subject-matter even though the change be slight. We have said commenting on these abbreviations (Muqatta'ah) that *Mim* is short for *A'lam* (Most Knowing). The present abbreviation, therefore, combines two names of God—Most Seeing, Most-Knowing, and uses the combined from as key to the subject-matter of the Surah. Both *seeing* and *knowing* are to be understood in their divine character : Seeing is what human beings do not see or having seen easily forget facts of past history, for instance ; and Knowing is what human beings have no means of knowing ; such knowledge has to come from God. The attribute of *Knowing* is added to the attribute of *Seeing*.

Under Surah Maryam

Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad : I have pointed out more than once that abbreviations made out of certain single letters are interpreted in different ways by different doctors of the Islamic Scripture. But if an interpretation can be traced to the Holy Prophet, then this one will have priority over all the others. From this point of view, only two interpretations seem valid and worthy of attention. According to some reports, Jewish

visitors of the Holy Prophet put forward the view that the Muqattah'ah (cut-out letters) stand for certain numbers. The *Alif-Lam-Mim*, for instance, is to be figured out thus-1 for *Alif*, 30 for *Lam*, and 40 for *Mim* a total of 71. When this was put to the Holy Prophet, he (peace on him) did not reject it. Because this interpretation was not rejected by the Holy Prophet, we have to accept it as valid. Were it not valid, the Holy Prophet would have rejected it. At the same time, when we deliberate over the Holy Quran, we find that—at any rate some of these figures are dates of prophecies which found due fulfilment.

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At the same time the Holy Prophet (on whom peace) is reported to have endorsed the view that the cut-out single letters stand for divine attributes, Kafi, Hadi, 'Alim (or 'Alim) and Sadiq. That is *Kaf* stands for the attribute Kafi, *Ha* for the attribute Hadi, *Ain* for the attribute 'Alim or 'Alim, and *Sad* for the attribute Sadiq (*Fat-hul Bayan*). That is to say this combination of letter stands for the Names of God. The point can be illustrated by *Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad*, the group of letters heading Surah Maryam the letters stand for the Names of God. Umm-i-Hani, a cousin (daughter of a paternal uncle) of the Holy Prophet reports that the Holy Prophet said that these letters denote four attributive names of God : Kafi, Hadi, 'Alim ('Alim) and Sadiq.

We have a report traced to Hazrat Ali which supports this view of the separated letters, and specifically about this group of *Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad*. According to this report. at times of difficulty, Hazrat Ali would pray in these words :

Ya, Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad ! Ighfir li

O Kat-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad ! Forgive me, forgive me.

Prayer, according to accepted Islamic practice, has to be linked with an attributive name of God. This, therefore, leaves no doubt that Hazrat Ali also regarded *Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad* as abbreviations for certain Names of God.

Hazrat Ibn Abbas has taken a similar view. Only, a little bit different from Umm-i-Hani's. Ibn Abbas thinks that *Kaf* stands for Kabir, *Ha* for Hadi, *Ya* for Amin, *Ain* for Aziz, and *Sad* for Sadiq. Which is to say that according to Ibn Abbas these letters do stand for the Names of God. Only, the names he thinks they stand for are different. *Kaf*, according to Umm-i-Hani stands for Kafi, but according to Ibn Abbas for Kabir, and *Ain*, according to Umm-i-Hani, stands for 'Alim or 'Alim, but according to Ibn Abbas for Aziz, *Ya* is left out in the report attributed to Umm-i-Hani, but included in Ibn Abbas's report and taken to stand for Amin.

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There are other views, Ibn Masud and some other companions take *Kaf* to stand for Mulk *Ha* for Illa-Lahu *Ya* and *Ain* for al-Aziz and Sad for al-Musawwir (*Fathul Bayan*).

True, these reports are different in their details. But one conclusion can be drawn from them with complete justice. It is that the separate letters stand for the attributes of God. What attributes? On this, there are differences between the reports. But on this point the Holy Prophet himself has said something and what he says has priority over what others may have to say on the same point. What the companions of the Holy Prophet (God be pleassed with them) have to say, will be regarded as conjectures. But if the reports of Ibn Masud, Ibn Abbas and Hazrat Ali had been different on the fundamental meaning of the cut-out letters, we could have attributed their views to their respective fantasies. But on the point that these letters are symbolic of the Names of God, they are unanimous. Hazrat Ali, Ibn Abbas, Abdullah b. Masud, all take them for divine attributes. And this is enough to assure us that the abbreviations are abbreviations for divine Names. What abbreviations stand for what Names, is quite another matter. On this differences are possible. And we need not object. On the fundamental point—that the cut-out letters are symbolic of Names of God—they all agree. The fixing of Names on the letters can be done with the help

of the subject-matter of the Surah. If differences on this point exist we have at least a method for resolving those differences. The method is to have a good look at the contents of the Surah as a whole, and ask ourselves, What divine attributes are accented in the Surah. If any attributes are not found accented in the Surah, they will be rejected. But here in the case of *Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad*—which combination heads Sura Maryam, we have the Holy Prophet's own interpretation duly reported. So, here, any other interpretation is out of question. The Holy Prophet—in reports—has not given us his interpretation of the cut-out letters, but of this one Sura he has. And we have Umm-i-Hani's report on this. According to which she assures that she *heard* the Holy Prophet interpret *Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad* in a certain manner. Other companions don't say they heard the Prophet give a certain interpretation—they give their own respective interpretations. The principle is an accepted principle that when an interpretation of any given point can be traced to the Holy Prophet, then this interpretation will take precedence over all other interpretations. Therefore, we conclude that in the present case the interpretation reported by Umm-i-Hani and attributed to the Holy Prophet (on whom peace) will have preference over all other interpretations. According to this, *Kaf* stands for Kafi, *Ha* for Hadi, *Ain* for 'Alim or 'Alim, and *Sad* for Sadiq. In this, according to me, we have the key to the meaning of the whole Surah,.

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Another thing we need to remember here is that the letters heading the Surah are five but the Names of God which the Holy Prophet has mentioned as their meaning are only four. The letters are *Kaf, Ha, Ya, Ain, Sad,* but the Divine Names mentioned are *Kafi, Hadi,* 'Alim and *Sadiq.* The *Ya* is dropped out. What could this mean? My own idea is that *Ya* is often included as a mark of exclamation. The Holy Prophet has here treated *Ya* as a mark of exclamation. The first two Names are deduced from the last two. Between the pairs is the mark of exclamation. Analysed the group of letters would read

like this :

Thou art Kafi
Thou art Hadi
O Thou !
Who art
'Alim and Sadiq !

Or,

O Thou Who art
Most Knowing
Most True -
Thou art
The Sufficient One,
The Only Guide !

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Under Sura Ta Ha :

In the commentary on Surah Yunus—discussing the subject of Muqattah'ah (the cut-out-letters) in the very beginning—it was conceded that *Ta-Ha* may be included among the abbreviations which head certain Surahs of the Quran. On more careful study of the point, however, involving a study of the Lexicons, and of the classical commentaries and a study of the contents of the Surah itself, it becomes clear that the *Ta* and the *Ha* of the Surah Ta-Ha do not stand-like the other Muqatta'ah - for any stable attributes or names or words. They cannot be treated, like the other Muqatta'ah. On the the other hand, it also appeared that *Ta* and *Ha* combined yield a full word with a meaning of its own. That meaning is *Ya Rajulun* (O Perfect Man). *Ta-Ha*, therefore, should not be treated as a Muqatta'ah. We also have the authority *Fat-hul-Bayan* :

انها بمعنى يا رجل فى لغـة عكل وفى لغـة عك قال الكلبى لم
قلت لرجل من عك يا رجل لم يجب تقول طـه وقال قطرب
هى كذلك فى لغة طى

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That is : According to the usage prevalent in the Arab tribes Akkal and Akka, *Ta-Ha* means 'O Perfect Man'. According to Kalbi, if you address a man of Akka tribe saying 'Ya Rajulun (O perfect man), he will not understand what you are saying, but if you address, him as Ta-Ha, he will respond at once. Qutrab, a well-known lexicographist and grammarian, one of Sibvayya's better known pupils, says that this word Ta-Ha-is in use among the Tai tribe and carries the same meaning. Lisan-al-Arab also reports the use of this word. In short, *Ta-Ha* is an accepted word among Arab tribes and carries the meaning 'O perfect man'. So we have translated it as such and not treated it as an abbreviation. It follows from this that the surah Ta-Ha is a continuation of the subject-matter of Surah Maryam (Fat-hul Bayan Vol. VI p. 49).

Under Surah Shu'ara :

Ta-Sin-Mim is one of the accepted abbreviations. Of the group, *Ta* stands for Latif, *Sin* for Sami and *Mim* for Majid. Which is to say that in this Surah and the Surahs which belong to the same group with it, Allah Almighty presents Himself as the Most Bounteous, Most Beneficent Master, Knower of the Subtlest-the most secret of all secrets, Listener of the Prayers of His servants, the Noblest and Most Majestic. Light is thrown on those divine laws which demonstrate His great and glorious nature, dispose of any lurking suspicion that His sovreignty may be tyrannical or in the least bit oppressive. The entire subject is dealt with by couvincing arguments.

Under Surah Naml :

This Surah also belongs to the *Ta-Sin* group of Muqatta'ah

Ta for Latif (Subtle, Elegent) and *Sin* for Sam'i (Listener).

The Surah preceding the present one is headed by *Ta-Sin-Mim*. Why is the *Mim* included in the Muqatta'ah of the preceding Surah dropped out of the Muqatta'ah of the present one? This is because in the earlier Surah the glory and greatness of God receive a special accent which they do not in the present Surah. The contents of the two are alike except for this difference. Apparent proof of this lies in the fact that in Sura Shu'ara the narrative is devoted more to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace). In the present Surah the narrative revolves more round Moses, and David and Solomon. The latter approach is appropriate when God is to be presented as the Knower of spiritual secrets and subtleties, as the listener of Prayers. But where greatness and glory of God are the attributes to be accented, the narrative has to turn rather to the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) and his companions, not so much to Moses, David or Solomon and their followers.

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Under Surah Al-Qasas :

This Surah is—again—reached by the abbreviation *Ta-Sin-Mim* using the same three letters that were used heading the Surah Shu'ara. Again, the three attributes, Latif (the subtle or the Elegant, the Listener), and Majid or Malik—the Master and Most Majestic God, are accented. The narrative is devoted to the story of Moses and Pharoah to project the first two attributes. The claim is presented that the Quran narratives is the true one—a broad hint this, that the Bible narrative of Moses and the Pharoah is not so true.

Under Surah Al-Ankabut :

This Surah is the first of the group which again uses the abbreviation *Alif-Lam-Mim* as its leading motif. We had this motif first used in the group from Baqara to Taubah.

Alif-Lam-Mim is an abbreviation made out of three single letters-thus: *Alif* for Ana (I am) *Lam* for Allah and *Mim* for 'Alam (Most Knowing), the whole abbreviation standing for 'I am Allah the Most knowing.' Divine knowledge, then, is the leading motif of the Surah and of the group of Surahs which it leads. The opening announcement of the present Surah makes it quite clear;

> Do men think they will be left alone because it is on their lips, 'We believe', and they will not be tried? (29 : 3)

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It is possible some readers are disturbed here by an apparent contradiction. The Surah is headed *Alif-Lam-Mim* ('I am Allah, the Most Knowing') And yet this opening announcement speaks of trials and tests, without which the lip professions of believers will not avail. God, the Most Knowing, must yet put believers through tests to know what quality of belief, believers have in their hearts. God the knower has need yet to know (God forbid!) But there is no contradiction here, no paradox. True, God is the knower, the Most Knowing. But neither disbelievers, nor weak believers know that He knows. They don't have the certitude they should have on the point. The opening announcement is meant to promote the required certitude. God knows all but at the same time He also wishes men at large to know some of what He knows. Who is a true believer who not is a question to be answered. To answer this question those who keep making outward profession of belief are put through trials again and again. Until it becomes evident to every one that the groups of believers called believers are really believers.

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